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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTANI DELEGATION STUDIES U.S. 911 EMERGENCY SYSTEMS

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¶1. SUMMARY. As part of an effort to enhance cooperation between the Crime Statistics and Special Records Committee of Kazakhstan's Procurator General's Office (PGO) and the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS), the Embassy's INL Office organized and co-funded the U.S. visit of two PGO representatives in November. The visit was aimed at finalizing a draft cooperation agreement between the two organizations and enabling the Kazakhstanis to study the work of 911 emergency systems in the United States. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

¶2. INL began implementing a project to improve the collection of crime statistics in Kazakhstan in 2004. INL provided 212 computers and conducted interagency statistics seminars to modernize PGO statistics offices throughout the country, improve the collection of crime statistics, and institute crime reporting standards. In 2006, INL organized a U.S. study tour for PGO representatives in order to initiate international cooperation between the two countries' crime statistics agencies -- the PGO's Crime Statistics and Special Records Committee and the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS). This was followed by an April 2008 visit to Kazakhstan of BJS representatives for a needs assessment of the Crime Statistics and Special Records Committee.

CONTINUED PGO/BJS COOPERATION

¶3. As a follow up to the April visit of the BJS, two PGO representatives visited the United States in November to finalize a cooperation agreement with the BJS and study 911 emergency systems. During the visit, the PGO and BJS agreed to exchange statistical data, reports, and other analytic materials on the extent and nature of crime, emerging crime trends, and the operation of the criminal justice systems of the two countries. The parties also agreed to exchange information on new methods, research, technologies, and tools used in the area of justice statistics as well as collaborate in conducting methodological studies and implementing projects of mutual interest. A draft cooperation agreement was discussed; it is

expected to be signed during the first quarter of 2009. (COMMENT: At a time when INL is closing down its project to improve the collection of crime statistics in Kazakhstan due to funding limitations, this PGO-BJS cooperation agreement is especially timely and important for sustainability and further development of crime data collection in Kazakhstan. The Government of Kazakhstan has already allocated funding for the PGO's future cooperation with BJS. END COMMENT.)

911 EMERGENCY SYSTEMS

14. Kazakhstan's existing emergency response system is not unified, but rather is operated by four different agencies. Specifically, the "01" fire alarm service and "051" technical breakages and emergencies service are operated by the Ministry of Emergency Situations; the "02" (landline) and "112" (cellular) police emergency service by the Ministry of Internal Affairs; the "03" ambulance service by the Ministry of Health; and the "04" gas leakage service by the Ministry of Defense. Such a multitude of phone numbers is difficult for people to remember in stressful situations. It is also difficult for the separate government institutions to react in a timely and effective fashion because they do not have mechanisms for communicating with each other.

15. To improve emergency response in Kazakhstan, the PGO's Crime Statistics and Special Records Committee was assigned the task to study the U.S. 911 emergency response system. Though it is not yet clear which agency in Kazakhstan will be responsible for coordination of a new, unified emergency response service, it is most likely that this function will be given to the PGO, which is an independent agency that reports directly to the President and oversees the activity of other agencies. (NOTE: The Ministry of Emergency Situations also remains under consideration for this responsibility. END NOTE.)

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16. During their November U.S. trip, the two PGO representatives met with the National Institute of Justice, the Department of Transportation, the E-911 Institute, the Federal Communications Commission, and the National Emergency Number Association to discuss establishment and operations of 911 systems, the next generation 911 initiative project, and international perspectives on emergency response. The PGO representatives also visited the District of Columbia's Unified Communication Center and the 911 Communications Center of Alexandria, Virginia's Police Department to see the work of operators in the field.

17. U.S. 911 experts told the Kazakhstanis that if a U.S.-style 911 system is adopted in Kazakhstan, it should be centralized, operated and funded from one head office, and take into account the latest technological developments. Even though the current 911 system in the United States is able successfully to serve around 240 million phone calls a year through 6,100 communication centers, it still needs to adapt to new technology, U.S. experts explained. Kazakhstan, they added, is in a position to develop a new system from scratch that will meet future technological standards.

18. The PGO representatives explained that, while technological issues connected to creating a new emergency response system may seem to be the most difficult challenge, psychological factors are an even greater hurdle to overcome. There must be a global change in mindset, so that the population learns to better trust law enforcement, and emergency response professionals learn how to be more responsive, understanding, and polite.

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